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ABSTRACT

This document is the second in a 5-year series of reports presented to the Prichard Committee, which monitors the progress of school reform in Kentucky. Three sections examine different aspects of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA)--primary school programs, school-based decision making (SBDM), and family-resource and youth-services centers. The report on primary education examined nine schools that implemented KERA mandates for primary programs. Findings indicate a need for teacher guidance in authentic assessment, development of a statewide curriculum, and funding for instructional supplies and materials. Other concerns involved problematic student grouping patterns, confusion about the law, and a low level of parent involvement. The section on SBDM notes that the KERA requires most Kentucky schools to form SBDM councils by 1996. Data derived from interviews with various stakeholders showed that participants in SBDM councils are concerned with the short (1-year) term length, the low level of parent participation, inadequate training of council members in group-process skills, and new faculty and district roles. The third section substantiates findings of a 1992 report, which found that the Family Resource Centers program within the KERA was well designed and effectively implemented. However, issues in evaluation and implementation are raised. (LMI)

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ED 366 044

PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING

FAMILY RESOURCE/ YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS

Second Year Reports to The Prichard Committee

September 1993

The Prichard Committee
for Academic Excellence

EA 025 434

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PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING

FAMILY RESOURCE/ YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS

Second Year Reports to The Prichard Committee

September 1993

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PREFACE

The Prichard Committee monitors the progress of school reform in Kentucky and reports that information to the public.

National consultants, knowledgeable about specific education reform programs, will track three aspects of the Kentucky Education Reform Act over five years. These areas include:

- Primary School Programs,
- School-Based Decision Making, and
- Family Resource and Youth Services Centers.

This document includes the second of those reports presented to The Prichard Committee. Questions or requests for copies of this report should be directed to the Committee.

The Prichard Committee
P.O. Box 1658
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PRIMARY PROGRAM REFORM IN KENTUCKY REVISITED

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September 1993

PRIMARY PROGRAM REFORM IN KENTUCKY REVISITED

A Second Year Report to The Prichard Committee

James Raths and John Fanning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In the spring of 1993 two educational consultants with extensive public school and university backgrounds re-visited nine schools that had been part of a first year report conducted for The Prichard Committee in 1992 titled, "The Status of the Primary School Reform In Kentucky and Its Implications." The purpose of the second year report was to document the progress that had been made implementing the primary program in the intervening twelve months. The sites were selected originally on the basis of geography, demographics and progress toward implementation.

Findings

Principal Findings Related to Questions Posed by the Researchers:

What progress has been made in complying with the primary program mandate?

A great deal of progress was observed over the twelve months but the rate of change for each of the critical attributes was erratic. Teachers had a better understanding of the primary program philosophy and were more "pro KERA." They also reported that they were working harder and longer than before KERA but not as hard as last year.

The increased confidence on the part of teachers can be partly attributed to an increased amount of training from persons "who had been there" and the increased availability of resources for instructional materials.

What problems persist and seem not to yield to well-intentioned attempts of teachers, parents and administration to solve them?

Seven problems have persisted over the year including:

Parent Involvement: In many of the schools there seemed to be an absence of significant, active parent involvement. Various reasons were given, including teachers believing there was a general lack of parent interest, event scheduling that did not accommodate parents who work or have difficulty with transportation and teachers unsure about their new professional roles in the primary programs who were concerned about criticism from parents.

Integration of five-year-olds: The logistics of including five-year-old half-day students was reported to be a problem. As a result, in many schools the inclusion of those children was closer to the letter of the law than its spirit, mixing five-year-old children with older students for

15 minutes a day, two or three times each week. In addition, many teachers reported their belief that it was impossible to teach a class that includes readers and non-readers. In contrast, other teachers enthusiastically grouped readers and non-readers in the same classroom with dramatic, exciting, and positive results.

"Slipping through the cracks": There was general concern on the part of parents and teachers that as a result of the shift from structured, skill-based programs to hands-on, cooperative, whole language process, that less verbal or outgoing children might slip through the cracks.

Problematic grouping patterns: Teachers and parents expressed the belief that having three or four age ranges in one classroom was problematic because the older children might not be challenged enough. In addition, the inclusion of half-day five-year-olds created logistical problems and concerns for meaningful and productive activities. Most preferred grouping patterns of two age groups.

Reporting student progress to parents: Teachers are making diligent efforts to communicate effectively with parents through conferences, narrative reports, and portfolios. This was not sufficient for parents who wanted to understand the relative progress their child was making compared to other children, which they believed they understood with traditional letter grades.

The Law (KERA): In spite of the heroic efforts on the part of the Kentucky Department of Education to disseminate information about KERA to teachers and school administrators, there is still misunderstanding and confusion about the law.

Authentic Assessment: Teachers were unsure about the scale and scope of authentic assessment and whether they could use traditional assessment measures.

What differences have the newly implemented mandates had on students?

Teachers report children are writing a great deal more, are better informed than their pre-KERA cohorts, are more ready to learn and are more able to use what they learn. Children are less isolated by age groups and are more likely to strike up friendships and work together in groups. In addition, children are more enthusiastic about learning and absent much less than before KERA was enacted.

What are the planning processes in place for meeting the mandates that must be implemented by fall, 1993?

In the spring, each school's plan, submitted to the Kentucky Department of Education, was returned with suggestions which were being used to fine tune individual plans for fall. Teachers were widely engaged in this process. Parents were not. In addition, faculty members were fully cognizant of their school's accountability index and threshold. Planning was carried out with those goals well in mind.

What are the attitudes of teachers and parents toward the primary program mandates? Have they changed? Are they strengthened?

As teachers became more knowledgeable about the elements that comprise the Primary Program and as they become more experienced in implementing the changes, their attitudes toward KERA and the critical attributes were more positive. However, the questions about multi-age grouping remain.

Less information was available about parents. Those with whom we spoke demonstrated four patterns of thought. The first group had a disposition to "trust the teachers" and if they believe it's good then it's all right with them and if the teachers are hostile or indifferent to the changes, parents follow suit. The second group was "gung-ho" for KERA and pleased with the progress of their own children. The third group was concerned about old-fashioned academic standards, phonics and grading procedures and the fourth group was concerned about social engineering and asked if their children were being used as "guinea pigs."

What resources still elude teachers in their efforts to comply with the mandates?

There was an observed improvement in the resources available to teachers with regard to instructional supplies and books. Teachers appreciated the additional availability of materials, but did feel that more were needed and continue to spend their own money for classroom supplies. In a few cases, teachers held on to the belief that reading was learned best through specific skills in specific order and had lobbied to keep basal textbooks which precluded their ability to purchase other badly need materials.

Teachers still reported a need for time to prepare and to work with other teachers. However, teachers did not report being bogged down with paperwork and reported the increased writing of narrative reports was useful. Teachers identified the use of aides as one solution to the time problem.

How have schools and teachers coped with the problems presented by half-day kindergarten students (five-year-olds) in implementing the ideals of the KERA primary program mandates?

In some schools five-year-old students were included with older children in music or PE classes but not in academic areas. In other schools, five-year-olds were involved with theme time, calendar time, and "show and tell" activities, but again, not in any academic areas. Some districts adopted a full day kindergarten program and children were grouped in multi-age classes all day. Other districts with half-day programs mixed age groups for half of the day with a new group joining in the afternoon. A final group of districts had done nothing to integrate the five-year-old children into the primary program.

What are some commonalities shared by schools which are making significant progress toward complying successfully with the KERA primary program mandates?

Common attributes of successful schools included grade groupings that did not overlap, such as K-1 and 2-3 rather than K-1, 1-2 and 2-3 because of the perception that older children in those groups were being disadvantaged; parental commitment to the program spurred by informed community leaders; dedicated supportive principals; teachers who had participated, for the most part voluntarily, in training programs on whole language, cooperative learning and "hands on" teaching; an acceptance on the part of teachers that successful reading could be taught without step by step reading skills; a willingness on the part of teachers to spend their own money to purchase materials and use their own time for planning; the availability of extra help in the classroom by aides, parents, or student teachers; a willingness to collapse special education into the regular classrooms; and the adoption of "writing as a process."

Recommendations

- Develop a district or statewide written curriculum that could provide continuity for children who move frequently and reassurance for teachers who fear a mismatch between topics taught and the new KIRIS assessments.
- Assist teachers in acquiring computers to help with clerical tasks such as narrative reports and authentic assessments.
- Develop creative ways to allow teachers essential planning time.
- Continue to increase funding for instructional supplies and materials.
- Calibrate the KIRIS assessment data with standardized tests so Kentucky citizens have a sense that the newer standards are "anchored" to the older measures.
- Help teachers understand how changes in the various KIRIS indices would allow them to reach their thresholds.
- Review the mandate for inclusion of five-year-old children in the primary program.
- Create financial incentives for including Chapter II and special education students in regular classrooms and for including five-year-old students in multi-age classrooms.
- Provide guidance for teachers in the use of standardized and teacher-made tests, assessment profiles and authentic assessments.
- Make clear the intent of the law and the consequences for failure to avoid a superficial, minimal approach to implementation of the primary program.

- Recognize the source of discontent of older teachers who have experienced success and harness their abilities, talents and energies to transform Kentucky classrooms.

- Engage in less "selling" and listen more carefully to resistant teachers.

- Study schools that are out of compliance in all but the bare minimums with the KERA mandates to gain insight into the change process and provide direction for new approaches to change strategies.

PRIMARY PROGRAM REFORM IN KENTUCKY REVISITED

James Raths and John Fanning

I. Introduction

In the late spring of 1992, under the aegis of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, we visited a number of school sites in Kentucky that were then working to comply with the primary school mandates set forth in the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990. Our findings and recommendations were promulgated in a report entitled, "The Status of the Primary School Reform In Kentucky and Its Implication."[1] For that report, Professor Lilian G. Katz of the University of Illinois was one of our collaborators.

This spring (1993), again with the sponsorship of the Prichard Committee, we re-visited the sites observed last spring to document the progress that had been made in the intervening twelve months, and more specifically to address the following questions:

1. What progress has been made in complying with the primary program mandates?
2. What problems persist and seem not to yield to well-intentioned attempts of teachers, parents, and administrators to solve them?
3. What differences have the newly implemented mandates had on students?
4. What are the planning processes in place for meeting the mandates that must be implemented by fall, 1993?
5. What are the attitudes of teachers and parents toward the primary program mandates? Have they changed? Are they strengthened?
6. What resources still elude teachers in their efforts to comply with the mandates?
7. How have schools and teachers coped with the problem presented by half-day kindergartens (five-year-olds) in implementing the ideals of the KERA primary program mandates?
8. What are some commonalities shared by schools which are making significant progress toward complying successfully with the KERA primary program mandates?

[1] The 1992 report is available from the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, P.O. Box 1658, Lexington, KY 40592-1658.

II. Procedures

We re-visited schools that had been active for over a year in implementing the KERA mandates for primary programs. In the main, we visited schools in which faculties and principals had volunteered to demonstrate and model the first steps toward reaching the ideals described in the KERA and in documents published and distributed by the Kentucky Department of Education.[2] Actually, two of the schools we visited were model schools whose initial efforts were underwritten in part by the Kentucky Department of Education. A general profile of the schools we visited is portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Characteristics of Schools
(N=9)

School Characteristics	Number of Schools
Region:	
Central & South Central Kentucky	5
Eastern Kentucky	4
Pilot School Status:	
Pilot School	2
Not a Pilot School	7
Size:	
Less than 300 students	3
More than 300 students	6

At each site, we renewed acquaintances we had made in the previous spring. There was one major difference in our procedures. In 1992, the three authors (Raths, Katz, and Fanning) visited schools primarily as individuals. After visits, the three authors wrote narrative reports of each visit, shared their notes, and eventually met together to agree on a set of conclusions and recommendations. This year, with the team diminished by the absence of Professor Katz, we (Fanning and Raths) visited the various schools together. In this way, with two sets of ears and eyes, we were able to keep better and more accurate notes, to check one another's perceptions promptly at the close of the day, and to summarize important observations and inferences based on a common experience.

Another difference in our approach this year had to do with the nature of our visits. Last spring, in addition to meeting with teachers, parents, and principals, we spent a considerable amount of time visiting classrooms to observe the various forms of implementation that took

[2] See especially, Kentucky Department of Education. (1993, January). State regulations and recommended best practices for Kentucky's primary program. Frankfort, KY.

place in interpreting the KERA mandates for primary program reform. This year we did not observe classrooms, but instead spent more time with teachers and with principals discussing the current scene and how it had changed since the last time we had visited.

Prior to each visit, we re-studied the case notes we had developed in the previous year. These notes described the spring 1992 status of the primary program in each school, and prompted questions we might ask about how particular problems had been addressed; what new concerns had arisen; and what changes had developed. The notes we had taken in the spring of 1992, rather thick descriptions of our observations, were useful in helping us tailor our inquiries to the idiosyncratic nature of each of the school buildings we visited.

As we did last year, prior to undertaking our interviews, we assured everyone with whom we spoke that neither their schools nor their names would be identified or knowingly made identifiable in our accounts. We have made every effort to keep this promise to our Kentucky colleagues.

At each site, we typically met with the principal for a review of developments, and then we talked with primary teachers in groups of one to three or four -- depending on their schedules and the time of day. We were made to feel welcome. Most teachers recognized us from the 1992 visit, and almost all of them had read our earlier report and told us they found it useful and fair. As was the case last spring, we felt that each meeting and each conversation represented a frank exchange on the part of caring and concerned professional teachers and administrators and parents in Kentucky.

We became aware of at least one significant limitation in our procedures. Most of the teachers with whom we spoke were generally positive toward the ideals of KERA and its specific mandates. As was the case in the previous year, we heard a great deal of speculation, based in large measure on second hand sources that there were pockets of resistance to the primary program mandates "in other schools and at other sites."

There were other constraints as well that hindered our work.

Since we are not Kentuckians, we may have lost or misinterpreted some nuances of culture and context that were embedded in our conversations with teachers, administrators, and parents.

Further, we did not visit all schools in Kentucky, and we did not survey a representative sample of Kentucky primary teachers. Our inferences are based on the purposive sample described briefly in the discussion above.

Finally, the schools are engaged in processes of rapid change. Our report is, in effect, a snapshot. If our descriptions are an accurate portrayal of selected schools in May of 1993, they are unlikely to be accurate pictures of the same Kentucky schools in September 1993 -- only three months later. The change process in Kentucky is continuous, unpredictable, comprehensive, and complex. We do believe, however, that our findings are pertinent to the citizens of Kentucky, generally, and to policy makers specifically.

The next section of our report summarizes our findings relevant to each of the eight questions guiding our project.

III. Findings

Findings Related to Question 1: What progress has been made in complying with the primary program mandates?

We saw a great deal of change, from last spring to the present, but the rate of change for each of the critical attributes of the primary school mandate was erratic. Teachers seemed to have a better understanding of the primary program philosophy. They spoke more easily and more fluently this spring than they did last year about the ideas concerning multi-age grouping, authentic assessment, continuous progress, professional teamwork, and the like. Further, they reported they were not working as hard as last year. They were still working hard and long, harder and longer than before KERA, but not so hard as during the first year. They laughed, somewhat resentfully, remembering how difficult the change had been and how many hours they had committed to making the new primary program work.

One source of the confidence we saw was the fact that since last spring they have received quite a bit of effective "training" from teachers and specialists. They again told us the best training was given by persons "who had been there" and who knew the problems inside and out. Another factor that has eased their transition into the new primary program has been the increased availability of resources -- such as "big" books, trade books, and hands-on materials.

Their confidence is also reflected in some of the decisions they made about their programs and schedules. Last year, many schools instituted a form of "departmentalization" -- with children rotating among teachers for their lessons addressing different academic subjects. This plan reduced the number of preparations each teacher was responsible for during the day -- and allowed them to perfect their presentations through repeated efforts. While the anticipated benefits of this plan were realized, specifically requiring less time on the teacher's part working on lesson planning, there were serious disadvantages as well. Students seemed "always" on the move, waiting in the hall for an on-going session to break up before theirs could begin. The large amounts of transition time took its toll, and many schools, therefore, abandoned the departmentalized plan. As a result, the new classroom schedules have contributed to smoother days, with less time-in-transit on the part of the students, and more general satisfaction with the program.

In sum, teachers with whom we met were significantly more "pro" KERA; their understandings of its central tenets were improved; and while they were more confident in what they were doing, they were fully aware of some important areas of limited or noncompliance on their part.[3]

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[3] Our judgement that there was a general favorable attitude among teachers for the central ideas of KERA was supported by an independent effort carried out by Professor Paul B. de Mesquita and his colleagues at the University of Kentucky. Sampling a population similar to ours, that is, teachers who are engaged in implementing KERA and who are eager

Findings Related to Question 2: What problems persist and seem not to yield to well-intentioned attempts of teachers, parents, and administrators to solve them?

There are at least seven problems that have persisted from spring of 1992 through the spring of 1993. These seven problems, highly visible last year, remain frustrating issues for teachers in the primary programs. The seven problems include: (1) parent involvement; (2) integration of the five-year-olds in the primary program; (3) the "slipping through the cracks" of some of the quiet, withdrawn, and passive children within the multi-aged setting; (4) the "high/low" grouping patterns perceived as advantageous to the "younger half" and disadvantageous to the "older half;" (5) parent misunderstandings of the progress of their students; (6) concerns about the intents of the law (KERA) itself and its mandates; and finally, (7) problems with implementing "authentic assessment." Each of these problems are discussed separately in the paragraphs that follow.

- Parent involvement: In many of the schools we visited, there seemed to be an absence of significant, active parent involvement. In some settings, the lack of parent involvement was attributed by teachers to a general lack of interest on the part of parents. Beyond mere interest, however, teachers did acknowledge that meetings and other events were scheduled at school without accommodating parents who worked or who lacked transportation. It was difficult for us to discern in these settings if parent failure to attend school functions was based on a lack of interest or logistical factors. In other settings, the lack of meaningful parental involvement seemed to reflect some apprehension on the part of teachers. In so many words, they would ask: "How can we cope with parents who become critical, who weigh in with opinions on how mathematics should be taught or how reading should be presented to children?" It became apparent to us that in schools where teachers' concerns were a problem in implementing parent participation programs, teachers needed some assurance that their professional autonomy would not be threatened in the process before they would fully embrace the idea of active parental involvement. In the schools we visited, such assurance was not available.

- Integration of five-year-olds: The inclusion of the five-year-old children in the primary program has not gone well. In many schools, the inclusion of entrance level children was closer to the letter of the law than its spirit.[4] The five-year-olds, in those instances, are barely included in something called "theme time" where there is some superficial program in which children of

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to learn more about it, he reported that "nearly two thirds of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the primary program [as mandated by KERA] will be effective in improving the overall school performance of their students." See de Mesquita, P. B., & Drake, J. C. (1993). Educational Reform and the Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Teachers Implementing Nongraded Primary School Programs. Lexington, KY: College of Education, University of Kentucky.

[4] Apparently, some teachers were told or led to believe that fifteen minutes a day of "integration" satisfies the mandates of KERA, and once the fifteen minutes are up, the school can revert to the "usual" pattern of ability and age-level grouping. We say more about the confusions among teachers about the "letter of the law" in a paragraph below.

mixed ages are brought together for 15 minutes two or three times a week. After this period of time, the entire primary program reverts back to age-grouping reminiscent of the pre-KERA schools in Kentucky.

Another facet of the problem facing teachers is that in almost every school, reading and language arts activities are scheduled in the morning. Five-year-olds who attend the AM session of the program can indeed be engaged in these activities. But what happens when the afternoon group appears? Teachers are loathe to dedicate the entire school day to reading and language arts, no matter how important those areas are. So, the afternoon group receives opportunities to learn mathematics and science, but not reading and language arts. Conversely, the morning groups learn no mathematics or science, because they are "afternoon" subjects. In addition, many teachers told us, over and over, that it is impossible to teach a class that includes readers and non-readers. In contrast to this deeply held belief on the part of some teachers, we visited schools where teachers enthusiastically grouped readers and non-readers in the same classroom with dramatic, exciting, and positive results.

- "Slipping through the cracks": Some teachers have expressed the fear that with the shift from a structured, skill-based, didactic program to a hands-on, cooperative, whole language process -- with teachers acting more as facilitators than pedagogues, a number of less verbal, less outgoing children may not be receiving enough individual attention to insure success. This concern may be another way of questioning the desirability of moving away from skill-driven, basal series, reading, and mathematics programs. Alternatively, it may be a call for more standard, curriculum-embedded measures of student progress. In either event, there was a general concern on the part of parents and teachers with whom we spoke that some children were slipping through the cracks -- and as a result are not being well served by the KERA mandates.

- Problematic grouping patterns: The majority of the teachers and parents we met believe that a traditional grade span of K-3 is too great. Most teachers and parents believe that a grade span of K-2 or 1-3 is too great. Almost all of the teachers and parents with whom we spoke believe that a two-grade span of multi-aged children is the best grouping response to the KERA mandate. With a grade pattern of K-1, as previously noted, the school with a half-day Kindergarten program is faced with the problem of changing some of the children in the group each day. In a grouping pattern of 1-2 and 2-3, many parents and teachers believe that the second grade children who are placed with first grade children are not as challenged as are second grade children who are placed with third grade children. In those successful situations where the grade span is 1-3, there seemed to be a significant problem in involving the five-year-old children in meaningful and productive ways.

- Reporting student progress to parents: Many teachers are making diligent efforts to effectively communicate the progress that students are making in school through parent conferences, by writing narrative reports, by communicating regularly and by keeping elaborate student portfolios. Most parents seem to believe that examples of their child's work and teacher narratives describing them are not sufficient for them to understand the relative progress their child is making. What parents seek, in almost every situation, is a comparative and/or familiar benchmark similar to letter grades and standardized tests with which they have become familiar and comfortable. Parents seemed to be telling us, "We don't really know how well, comparatively speaking, our children are learning."

• The Law (KERA): In spite of the heroic efforts on the part of the Kentucky Department of Education to disseminate information about KERA to teachers and school administrators, there are some professionals in the schools we visited who either do not understand the law or are interpreting the law in such a way as to avoid substantive implementation of the mandate.[5] For example, we learned from some teachers that the KERA language proscribed giving tests and quizzes to assess student progress. Other teachers told us that after grouping children in multi-age settings for 15 minutes a day, several times a week, it was consistent with the mandates of KERA to devote the remainder of the day and week to didactic lessons organized for children grouped by ability and age. Still others told us that the "15 minute" rule just cited is operative for five-year-olds, but not for older children. That is, while all children in Primary Programs should be in some sort of multi-age setting most of the day, five-year-olds needed to be accommodated in this fashion only 15 minutes a day, several days of the week. Finally, as perhaps a most bizarre example, we were told with firmness and some heat that children could not be retained in grade, under the mandates of the KERA language, if they had been in a mixed class, such as 1-2, with the same teacher, once they had been in the group for two years. Such confusion seems rampant.

• Authentic Assessment: There seem to be two related concerns with authentic assessment. First, teachers seemed to want to know something about the scale and scope of the authentic assessment effort. How much documentation is required? For what purposes? For what audiences? In which academic areas? In addition, teachers seemed unsure when or if they may use traditional measurement procedures in holding individuals accountable, for communicating process to parents, and in assessing learning readiness.

Findings Related to Question 3: What differences have the newly implemented mandates had on students?

According to the teachers, children in the primary program are writing a great deal more this year than last, and more this year compared to pre-KERA days. If there is any truth at all to the idea that children learn writing by writing, then the writing curriculum is operating at optimum levels.

Secondly, teachers and parents assure us that children in primary programs are better informed than their pre-KERA cohorts had been. They are more ready to learn, have dispositions to use what they are learning in many different ways, in many different places, and almost always with effect.

With a few exceptions, children seemed to be learning to "like one another" -- to strike up friendships across traditional "grade levels" and for older children to advocate for the younger

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[5] One explanation of how these "wrong views" become so prevalent is found in an analysis of resistance behavior. In a setting where there is general disfavor toward a specific element of KERA, professionals may "shop around," asking questions about "what if" and "what counts as compliance" to a number of different people, waiting for the answer they are seeking. They accept and then broadcast an answer that is modest and less-threatening. There may be other explanations as well for this phenomenon.

ones. They are less isolated by age and grade groups than before. Along with these newer and better affective conditions comes additional ease and comfort in working together in groups and effective teamwork while participating in teams with common objectives.

Finally, teachers report that children are absent much less than before -- a result teachers attribute to the enhanced enthusiasms on the part of children for learning and for schooling. The reports of teachers may not satisfy the needs of the Doubting Thomases of the world, and additional and more objective data may be more compelling to policy makers in the State of Kentucky, but the credibility of what we were told was supported by the consistent messages we heard to this effect in school after school.

Findings Related to Question 4: What are the planning processes in place for meeting the mandates that must be implemented by fall, 1993?

Each school submitted a plan last spring, outlining how it intended to come into compliance with KERA by fall, 1993. Each plan was critiqued by the Kentucky Department of Education, with suggestions for improvement.[6] While the arrangements at the various schools we visited are different, some using the School-Based Decision Making Council, others using ad hoc committees, while others harnessed the energies of elected steering committees, all were engaged in responding to the suggestions offered by the Department of Education (and by others) in fine tuning their plans for the fall.

In addition, principals and staff were aware of the Accountability Index that resulted in each school's being assigned points on a scale that measures progress in a number of dimensions -- affective ones as well as cognitive. While on occasions, we were not sure principals were fully cognizant of the challenges represented by the thresholds assigned to them in terms of targets, in every case they seemed alert to the seriousness of the goals and confident that they could meet them. There was no doubt that the planning effort was carried out with the Accountability Index well in mind.

While principals seemed to engage teachers in genuine and significant ways in the planning process, there was little evidence that parents were involved, aside from those schools using School Based Decision-Making Councils.

Findings Related to Question 5: What are the attitudes of teachers and parents toward the primary program mandates? Have they changed? Are they strengthened?

As teachers became more knowledgeable about the elements that comprise the Primary Program Mandates, and as they became more experienced in implementing program changes, their attitudes toward KERA and the critical attributes of Kentucky's Primary Program were more

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[6] The Kentucky Department of Education deserves special praise for its effort to respond to the plans submitted by teachers. Persons suspicious of bureaucracies may have anticipated that the 800 plus reports required by the Department may have simply serve as "dust collectors" on some obscure Frankfort shelf. Instead, thoughtful and useful comments were sent to each school. It represented a tremendous effort.

positive. They are especially committed to elements of program designs implemented in the various schools -- whole language, writing as a process, and "hands-on" science and mathematics.

As suggested earlier in this report, teachers had some serious questions remaining about multi-aged grouping. Almost all teachers are convinced that a traditional K-3 classroom incorporates too wide a range of interests, aptitudes, and readiness to accommodate well without a great many more resources -- including materials, teacher aides, and time to plan.

We had less information this time concerning the attitudes of parents. Those with whom we spoke suggested that at least four patterns of parent attitude exist.

- The first is one characterized by a disposition to "trust the teacher." Parents in this group seem to be saying, "If the teacher says the Primary Program Mandates represent good education for my children, then I'm all for them." This represents the good news. In those schools where teachers are hostile or indifferent to KERA, parents in the "trust the teacher" category are also likely to have negative or indifferent attitudes.

- The second is best described as "gung-ho" for KERA. They are pleased with the progress of their own children in the primary program, and are confident that things are going well and will continue to go well. They serve, locally, as cheerleaders for the KERA.

- The third group are concerned parents -- concerned about what is happening to old-fashioned academic standards measured by standardized tests; about phonics in reading; and about grading and retention policies that reward hard workers and punish those who can't or won't keep up.

- Finally, there is a fourth group of parents who are not so conversant with the details of KERA and how they are implemented in the schools. Instead, they are worried about social engineering and the impact of "do-gooders" on local policy. At times, they wonder loudly and widely about the experimentation that is taking place in Kentucky with their children as "guinea pigs."

Findings Related to Question 6: What resources still elude teachers in their efforts to comply with the mandates?

We saw a great deal of improvement in the resources available to teachers. There were more "hands on" materials in the schools; more "big books", and more "trade books." In addition, there was much less reliance on "canned" materials aimed at teaching thematic units. It was our judgment that the diminishment in interest in the canned materials was not generated by not having any present -- but in the growing realization on the part of teachers that they could develop better units than the commercially produced sets of curriculum materials and associated artifacts that were available for purchase.

However, there remain at least three areas of continued concern:

- Time. In elementary schools, teacher planning time has always been a difficult problem. In most schools, the only planning time available during the school day for a teacher is when that teacher's class is taught by another teacher in related areas such as Physical Education, Art, or Music. In many schools, there are only a few separate, special area teachers available, and therefore the amount of individual teacher planning time is severely limited. In addition to individual planning time for the development of lessons, the analysis of assessments, the communication with parents, and other pressing tasks of instruction, there is a genuine need for common planning time when teachers in the primary program can meet together to plan thematic units, solve individual and group problems, and develop long- and short-range plans.

The scale of schooling is immense, and perhaps the most expensive thing a superintendent can do is to employ one more teacher in every school. Yet, if KERA is to succeed, ways will have to be found to schedule teachers' time or use para-professional personnel to free teachers to do the work that is so vital to its success. It is immoral and unethical to expect teachers to give their time away -- weekends, late evenings, and even summers -- when they are off the payroll. As one teacher told us: "I am committed to KERA, but also dearly want to stay a married woman, and if I give any more time to my teaching, my husband will leave me."

We had anticipated that teachers might report that they had become bogged down in paper work requirements -- writing reports, carrying out evaluations, and writing out lesson plans. Interestingly enough, we did not hear any teachers complain of increased paper work due to the KERA mandates. We did come to learn that writing the narrative report cards was extremely difficult and challenging. Writing narrative reports was not characterized by the teachers with whom we spoke in a derisive way as "paper work" but instead this task was seen as an important opportunity useful for teachers as well as students and parents.

- Aides. One solution to the "time" problem is to provide as aides part time teachers or long term substitutes who have the training and the authority to teach in the teacher's absence. This option would be less expensive than hiring additional full time teachers. But failing that, teachers need help in the classroom implementing the critical attributes of Kentucky's primary school program.

Every teacher feels strongly that additional adult "hands" are needed in classrooms with a wide range of pupil achievement, aptitude, interest, and deportment especially where the program is designed for active participation, interaction, movement, problem solving, and process-based activities. Aides make it possible to conduct authentic assessments; to see to it that each child is engaged in a developmentally appropriate educational practice; and to deliver meaningful qualitative reports to parents.[7] We were frequently told that by eliminating the "pull-out" Chapter II program and providing service in the regular classroom, the additional adult made a significant difference for all children in the class. According to many teachers, the same advantage exists when special education children are provided services in the regular classroom

[7] Many teachers felt that the provision of aides would diminish the likelihood that anyone in the class would "fall through the cracks." See our earlier discussion of this issue.

and two teachers are available as partners for all of the children. Some districts have provided paid aides for the primary classrooms and some schools, parent and other community members volunteer to lend a helping hand.

In each of these instances where additional adult "hands" were available, the teachers were most appreciative, but wanted still more help. There was some sort of pattern of diminished benefits here. As more help is arranged, more planning time is needed to coordinate and implement the additional resources to ensure a successful cooperative venture.

- Materials. We have stated in several places in this report, including the lead paragraph to this section, that we saw many more useful and used materials in place than a year ago. The increase in the availability of materials was pronounced and accounted in large measure for the progress we saw from last spring to this. However, it is not contradictory or inconsistent to say that additional materials are needed.

Teachers continue to spend a considerable amount of their own money in purchasing appropriate materials for use in their classrooms in spite of the large increase in the amount of money which has been made available for this purpose in the past year. Teachers are desperately seeking multiple copies of trade books, hands-on science and mathematics equipment, and additional classroom supplies.

In this regard, we observed an interesting phenomenon. Some teachers shared with us their deep and abiding belief that to learn how to read well, children need to learn specific skills in specific order. They were worried that children might leave their classrooms or leave the primary program without learning all of the required skills.[8] And further, teachers were convinced that the way to ensure that all skills are taught directly and systematically to all children is to use a basal reader. So, in a number of schools, teachers had successfully lobbied for the adoption of a basal text -- evidently not taking into account that the expense associated with a basal adoption would almost certainly preclude purchasing other badly needed materials more consistent with the philosophies of whole language and writing process approaches. The advocacy of basal adoptions on the part of some teachers seemed uncharacteristically unthoughtful on their parts -- and may portend some sort of retreat to a form of teaching the KERA was meant to overcome. It is an important symptom.

Findings Related to Question 7: How have schools and teachers coped with the problem presented by half-day kindergarten students (five-year-olds) in implementing the ideals of the KERA primary program mandates?

We observed or discussed with teachers the following attempts to cope with the Kindergarten program mandate.

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[8] In a widely acclaimed early study of teachers working to change their classroom structures, Bussis, A. M. et. al. concluded that teacher views associating skills with grade levels prevented them from experimenting with their curriculum. See Beyond surface curriculum, 1976, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

In some schools, five-year-olds were involved in most trivial ways. They were invited to share in music classes and in PE classes, but in no academic area. Teachers and administrators using this pattern felt they were in full compliance with the expectations held for them.

In other schools, five-year-olds were involved in special periods set aside for "integration," not in PE,or music or art, but in periods labelled "theme time" or "calendar time." In these settings five-year-olds and other children participated in thinking activities; problem solving of a sort; and "show and tell" that permitted full participation of those engaged in the process, but not with anything that could be termed an academic activity.

Some districts adopted a full-day Kindergarten policy, and five-year-old children were in school all day long. In these schools, it was the practice to group children in multi-aged classes, such as K-1 or K-1-2.

Even without a full day program, some schools grouped children in a K-1 class, with half the group leaving at noon to go home, and with a new "half" of the class joining the rest during or after lunch. Teachers in these contexts made use of centers, and rotated lessons from morning to afternoon to give similar access to learning new material to morning and afternoon students.

Finally, there were a number of districts which were doing nothing about integrating five-year-old children into the Primary Program. Teachers and administrators apparently found the problem too complex to address or saw little merit in the proposal.

Findings Related to Question 8: What are some commonalities shared by schools which are making significant progress toward complying successfully with the KERA primary program mandates?

We saw the following attributes of the more successful schools:

- Two grade groupings, with no over-lapping. Multi-aged groups were K-1 and 2-3 or 1-2-3 instead of having a 1-2 group and a 2-3 group. As discussed above, where the overlapping classes existed in the same building, parents (and some teachers) perceived that children in the lower end of the split were gaining an advantage and those in the higher end of the split were being disadvantaged.

- Parental commitment to the program -- spurred by informed community leaders who were aware of KERA and its promises.

- Dedicated principal. The implementation of the primary program requires administrators to defend the program over and over in public meetings. In addition, a commitment to the Primary Program must be reflected in decisions for allotting resources within the school. In successful schools, principals were extremely supportive of the KERA mandates.

- Teachers who had participated in training programs addressing the major components of the primary program -- whole language, cooperative learning, "hands on" teaching. We were impressed with the impact and effectiveness of the training programs that teachers received. It must be understood, however, that teachers almost always volunteered for the training, and there were a large number of teachers in Kentucky who have not volunteered.

- A skepticism about the link between successful reading and knowing a set of "reading skills." Where there was a strong commitment to "reading skills" there was a weaker record of implementing the ideals of the KERA mandates. As teachers were committed to the idea that their students needed to acquire reading skills taught directly and systematically according to some fixed schedule, we saw their reliance on work books, basal texts, and homogeneous grouping in classrooms. These approaches seemed to us to run counter to the full implementation of the critical attributes found in the KERA primary program mandates.

- A willingness on the part of teachers to spend their own money to purchase equipment, materials, and other important teaching aids for their classrooms.

- A willingness to give their personal time to doing team planning -- often late in the evenings, weekends, and during summer time.

- The availability of help in the classroom -- parent volunteers, aides, student teachers -- to deliver the program.

- The experimentation with collapsing special education into regular education, and engaging Chapter II resources and special education resources for the betterment of the educational program of the entire school.

- The adoption of "Writing as a process" as an integral part of the school's literacy program. Where teachers have implemented a writing program, the multi-age pattern seemed to flourish.

III. Recommendations

To advance the goals of KERA in the arena of primary programs, we offer the following recommendations. In our judgment, they flow from our observations in Kentucky this spring. Our recommendations are organized by two headings -- recommendations for teachers and schools and recommendations for the Kentucky Department of Education. As might be expected, there is an overlap between the categories.

Recommendations for teachers/schools:

1. There is a need to develop a written curriculum -- either by the district or the State. This recommendation is pressing for the following reasons:

a. Children are transferring from school to school, and either missing or repeating instruction.

b. Without a curriculum to guide them, teachers believe there is a chance for a mismatch between the topics taught in a primary program and the emphasis of the high stakes assessment program, the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS) their students will be facing in fourth grade.

c. The teachers have implemented programs such as "process writing" and "whole language" which down play demonstrating skills out of the contexts of actual reading and writing tasks. Teaching in this vein is less didactic and less "direct." In spite of assurances to the contrary from the State Department of Education, teachers are concerned that KIRIS gives more emphasis to using skills out of context. As they see it, KIRIS places heavy emphasis on mechanics such as spelling and grammar. Teachers are uneasy about the apparent mismatch of philosophies here. By having a formal curriculum in the State or the district to guide both teaching and assessment, teachers and the public as well can become convinced that the two are well aligned. Now, evidently, it is difficult for teachers to discern how KIRIS aligns with classroom instruction.

2. It was clear that implementing the mandates of KERA at the primary program level is incredibly labor intensive. Teachers should have access to and learn to use computers to help them with the clerical aspects of their newly defined responsibilities -- such as writing narrative reports and recording authentic assessments.

3. If the KERA primary mandate is to succeed, creative ways need to be designed to allow teachers essential planning time to develop their programs and to solve their instructional problems. Teachers and districts should be encouraged to seek alternative solutions to the planning-time problem, perhaps with the use of special incentives set aside for this purpose.

4. Although the State and the districts have increased expenditures in the materials category over the past year, the demand for teaching supplies, materials, and texts remains pressing. Every effort needs to be made at both the district and the school levels to re-order priorities to make additional resources available to the primary program where the availability and use of concrete materials is so absolutely vital.

Recommendations for the Kentucky Department of Education:

The recommendations in this set fall into two categories -- recommendations for policy and recommendations for training.

Policy Recommendations:

1. To enhance the credibility of KERA, it is important to calibrate the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS) with standardized tests -- so Kentucky citizens have a sense that the newer standards are "anchored" to the older measures. For

example, the Kentucky Department of Education could demonstrate that a sample of students classified as "proficient" in mathematics perform well on a standardized test -- and higher than their classmates who are classified as only "novice." Such an effort could be undertaken in pilot studies around the State.

2. The public and the professionals need an explication of the Accountability Index thresholds assigned to each school as a measure of its efficacy. The explication could include some "what-if" scenarios to show how changes in the various indices would change the attained total score. That is, is it as effective to move children at the high end of the scale up one notch, or is the Index more profoundly affected if a smaller number of children at the low end of the scale are moved up one notch? It is our understanding that some high school students in Kentucky developed a computer program that did just what we are suggesting. Their effort could be refined and disseminated so that school leaders and teachers could "experiment" with different scenarios.

3. The mandate to include five-year-old children in the primary program needs review. At the very least, incentives need to be provided to schools to merge five-year-olds with older children in significant (as opposed to cosmetic) ways.

4. The Kentucky Department of Education should provide financial incentives for the inclusion of Chapter II and Special Education children in the regular classroom and make it financially desirable to create alternative arrangements for the inclusion of five-year-old/entry level children in multi-age classrooms.

Recommendations for Training:

5. Teachers need guidance in the use of teacher-made tests, standardized and curriculum embedded tests, assessment profiles, as well as the design, use, and storage of authentic assessments.

6. The Kentucky Department of Education must make absolutely clear the intent of the law and the consequences for failure to implement its mandates. If in fact it is acceptable to involve children in mindless activities in a multi-age setting for a few minutes each day, or for a few times each week, there will be many schools across the State which will delight in implementing a superficial, minimum approach, and retain current patterns of tracking, and graded groups for the major portion of the school day.
7. Care must be taken in working with teachers to acknowledge the naysayers in the State who are resistant to the primary program mandates. Steps must be taken to:

    a. Honor the traditions of the older teachers. By this we mean that there are a number of teachers in the State who were honored for their work in the tradition of Madeline Hunter in particular and "direct instruction" in general. They are a bit confused by the sudden shift of gears that has relegated them to positions of lower status. It is important to recognize the sources of their discontents and to harness their abilities, talents, and energies in any efforts to transform Kentucky schools.

b. Engage in less "selling" -- especially "hard selling" and do more listening to what the resistant teachers are saying.

c. Study schools who are out of compliance, in all but the bare minimums, with KERA mandates. Such efforts are likely to provide insights into the change process particular to the State of Kentucky, and give direction to the adoption of new change strategies.

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SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING: PROGRESS AND PROMISE

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August 1993

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A Second-Year Report to The Prichard Committee

Jane L. David, Ed.D.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) aims to create a performance-based education system to increase the learning of all students. The premise of this ground breaking legislation is that those closest to the students should have the authority to make school-level policy decisions in exchange for assuming responsibility for student performance. School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) is KERA's vehicle for delegating authority to each school site. Under SBDM, schools form councils which control many decisions about curriculum, staffing, and instruction, as well as discipline and extracurricular activities. With certain exceptions, KERA requires all schools by 1996 to form councils composed of three teachers and two parents, elected by their constituencies, and the principal.

Findings from the second year of a five-year study of SBDM are based on interviews in schools, districts, state agencies, and associations, and on a review of several hundred newspaper articles and other publications. I interviewed teachers, administrators, and parents in ten schools in three districts. In each district I also interviewed school board members, superintendents, community members, and central office administrators

Given the magnitude of change envisioned by KERA, progress in implementing SBDM is considerable. SBDM continues to be a major force in communicating that KERA represents fundamental change, strengthened this year by actual budget allocations to site councils and stronger statements from the state on council authority. More and more schools are opting to establish councils prior to the deadline. As of August 1993, 660 schools have established councils. Councils that have been in operation for more than one year are taking on more responsibility. Across the state, there has been substantial press coverage of site councils which has been overwhelmingly positive.

Because council members view their first year on a council as a learning year, they and almost all other respondents would prefer to have staggered two-year terms instead of the one-year terms currently in law. Another concern is the low participation of parents, especially poor and minority parents. Training for council members is adequate for introductory technical information but weak on connecting the purpose of councils to KERA's learning outcomes and on taking full advantage of the potential authority under their control. Councils also need more opportunities to learn meeting and group process skills. An even larger training need is for those not on councils--school faculties and district administrators especially--to learn how their roles change under a more decentralized system.

The budget allocation process occurred smoothly, by and large, with far less resistance than anticipated. At the same time, the release of the assessment scores and thresholds had less of an impact on councils' decision making than expected. Councils still focus their attention on issues of discipline and sports, not on curriculum and instruction. Selecting the principal remains the most important decision to councils.

As more schools create councils, the state and districts face the challenge of creating an infrastructure that can support a new, more decentralized system. Schools face the challenge of creating councils that serve to guide and support changes in teaching and learning and that operate on behalf of the entire school community. Everyone in the system from the school to the state faces the personal challenge of managing the stress that accompanies this kind of massive change. Districts must struggle with what these changes mean for their role as a new balance is forged between districts and schools.

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING: PROGRESS AND PROMISE

Jane L. David

Introduction

This is the second annual report in a five-year study of progress in implementing School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) under the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). KERA aims to create a performance-based education system, accompanied by a substantial increase in funding and a more equitable allocation across districts. Underlying this comprehensive legislative reform is the premise that those closest to the students (teachers, parents, and school administrators) have the authority to make school-level policy decisions, in exchange for assuming responsibility for student performance.

School-Based Decision Making is KERA's vehicle for delegating authority to each school site. Under SBDM, schools form councils which control many decisions about curriculum, staffing, and instruction, as well as discipline and extracurricular activities. (See Attachment A). With certain exceptions, KERA requires all schools by 1996 to form councils composed of three teachers and two parents, elected by their constituencies, and the principal.

Together with accountability, SBDM forms the underpinning of a system designed to increase the performance of all students, guided by a set of challenging student learning outcomes. These learning outcomes convey a new vision of teaching and learning that emphasizes the need for students to understand concepts and apply new knowledge, not simply memorize facts and isolated skills.

To guide schools in transforming their curriculum and instruction, the rest of the system includes curriculum frameworks that communicate these goals, professional development in support of their implementation, a mandatory ungraded primary program, and a corresponding set of new assessment instruments that form the basis for accountability with consequences. The new assessments emphasize direct measures of performance and thinking, including portfolios and performance tasks. Together with a range of additional supports, including on-site preschool and family resource centers, these components of KERA form an integrated vision of reform. This is the context in which SBDM must be viewed.

The long-term goal of the research is to understand how SBDM connects to the rest of KERA and, specifically, to what extent and how SBDM contributes to the ultimate goal of transforming curriculum and instruction in ways that increase student performance. In the short run, however, judgments about progress in implementing SBDM must be grounded in the extent to which the other elements of KERA are progressing. Since each has a different time line for full implementation, expectations for progress rest on how much is in place in a given year. For example, the curriculum frameworks were completed and released at the end of the 1992-93 school year; hence, their influence in guiding curriculum change will not be visible for some time.

Study Design

To track progress in implementing SBDM, and to begin to understand the relationship between SBDM and the rest of KERA, I analyzed data from a number of sources. In the first year the research focus was on the first steps in getting councils up and running. The second year's data collection focused more on the relationship between the district and site councils, how councils change as they mature, and what helps and hinders their progress. The third year will focus on the connections between council actions and changes in classroom practices.

To understand how councils actually operate, and what supports and hinders their effective functioning, I visited a sample of districts across the state chosen to reflect different geographic areas and sizes. I interviewed teachers, administrators, and parents in ten schools in three districts. In each district I also interviewed school board members, superintendents, community members, and central office administrators. Five of the ten schools in two districts were also in the first year's sample, allowing me to track progress within the same schools.

To get a broader picture across the state, I looked at changes in the numbers of schools with councils, training opportunities, and changes in state policies. I interviewed staff in the Kentucky Department of Education, two Regional Service Centers, the Office of Educational Accountability, as well as those who hear about SBDM issues from the field including the Prichard Committee and the Kentucky Association of School Councils (KASC). In addition, I attended the first statewide conference of KASC and interviewed attendees. I also reviewed several hundred articles from June 1992 through June 1993 which mention SBDM. These articles, from newspapers across Kentucky, represent over 130 of the 176 districts in the state.

Findings

Background. The first-year study found that SBDM has been a major force in communicating the importance and seriousness of KERA across the state and a critical link between schools and their communities. Teachers especially welcome the opportunity to select their principal and parents welcome the opportunity to have an official voice in school policy making. Councils tend to operate according to the leadership style of the principal. Not surprisingly, the first year raised questions, concerns, and conflicts--the very signs of progress in an undertaking as complex and dramatic as KERA.

While off to a strong start, the first year also found SBDM facing several challenges. These included shifting from adversarial relationships to partnerships, focusing school decision making on teaching and learning, ensuring ongoing opportunities for on-the-job professional development, and finding the right balance between state and district requirements on the one hand and school council discretion on the other.

Not surprisingly, these issues persist, yet the second year findings clearly demonstrate continued progress towards the ultimate goals of KERA. Overall, the allocation of budgets to schools, clarification of council authority, and the release of baseline test scores and thresholds for each school combined to strengthen the signal that SBDM represents a significant change in decision-making authority, which the state is committed to upholding. Further evidence comes from State Board decisions on alternative models for councils communicating somewhat more

flexibility, including, for example, acceptance of models with someone other than the principal as chair. In addition, the newly formed Kentucky Association for School Councils (KASC) held its first annual conference, which attracted over 450 participants from across the state, lending additional recognition, support, and information to the growing number of council members.

Council Formation and Composition. In the fall of 1991, 327 of Kentucky's 1366 schools had formed site councils. By June 1992, that number increased to 474 and by August 1993 to 660. Viewing the increase as a doubling of numbers over roughly two years, one projection is that doubling again over the next two years will bring almost all schools into the fold well before the 1996 deadline. Alternatively, if the projection is based on the rate of increase (333 new councils over 22 months equals 15 per month), the 1996 deadline will not be met.

Neither projection is likely to be at all accurate, however, because the reasons schools choose to form or not to form councils change as the context changes. For example, only a handful of Jefferson County's 158 schools have established councils, and, until complex issues around potential conflicts among state law, local board policy, and collective bargaining agreements are resolved, the number will probably remain small. Once these are resolved, the numbers are likely to change quickly. In addition, knowing that councils will be required by 1996, some schools see little advantage in doing so prior to that time. These appear to include schools in which faculty are satisfied with their degree of involvement in decision making, those in which faculty experience or fear school or district administrative resistance, and, perhaps most common, those in which teachers already feel overwhelmed and do not want to take on any more responsibilities until absolutely necessary. There is still some confusion around when and how often schools can choose to vote on establishing a site council. The opportunity to select a new principal remains a major motivation for forming a site council.

Across the state, parent participation in running for the council and voting in elections is dismally small. Reflecting historical patterns of involvement, overall participation is low and that of poor and minority parents virtually non-existent. In small rural schools it is difficult even to find willing parents who are not either employees or relatives of employees of the school system.

> ***"We had to postpone our election for two months because we couldn't get two parents."*** Elementary school principal.

On the positive side, however, these issues are receiving considerably more attention across the state at all levels. A widely publicized 1992 survey by the Kentucky School Boards Association reported only four percent of eligible parents voted in council elections. The March 1993 Bluegrass State Poll reported a considerably higher percentage--22 percent of parents with a child in a school with a council said they have voted in a council election. The 10 schools in my interview sample are much closer to the four percent figure. In addition, principals and teachers in many schools are committed to attracting more parents and taking steps to do so, from open houses to sports events where parents hear about SBDM. Suggestions range from advertising on television at night to "talking up" site based councils at school board meetings that draw big crowds. At the state level, the Commissioner has publicly stated a desire that the State School Board or Legislature require minority representation in schools with at least the state's average minority enrollment.

In addition to parent participation, teacher participation is proving problematic in some schools. Primary teachers are especially unlikely to want to assume responsibilities on top of the challenge of implementing the primary program. Many teachers already have several extracurricular activities they are responsible for, and younger teachers are likely to have young children at home.

> ***"It's hard to get teachers interested in being on the council because they are doing so many things."*** Teacher council member.

Other issues around council formation include a desire for longer, overlapping terms, some resistance to the mandatory composition of councils, and preferences for choice of who chairs the council. There seems to be virtually universal agreement that council members should have two-year terms that are staggered. Council members interviewed all say that understanding the role and operation of the council takes a year "to get the hang of." Most council members describe their first year as a learning year. Also, the investment in training is lost if there is significant turnover each year.

> ***"The first year everyone was kinda scared. [The second year] you feel freer to say and dream than you did the first year. And the fact that we can make changes and not have to go through the board makes a big difference and encourages you."*** Teacher council member.

Some schools express a desire to expand council membership to include classified employees, non-parent community members, and, in secondary schools, students. This is more likely to be the case in schools that have already constituted schoolwide groups that are more inclusive, such as Participatory Management in Jefferson County or Effective Schools Councils in various schools across the state. Arguments that other stakeholders can serve as non-voting members and as committee members is satisfactory to some, but others feel the right to vote--or to participate in reaching consensus--is key.

Some councils also express interest in having someone other than the principal be the chair. This too seems to be more likely in schools which have a history of some type of schoolwide decision making body. In general, these issues seem to be on the road to resolution. The State Board has demonstrated some flexibility in accepting alternative models, including who can chair the council--although this still must be done as a matter of exception with an application for an alternative model, not as a default.

SBDM Training. Similar to last year, council members report availability of introductory training on what SBDM is about. Some also receive training in consensus building, setting agendas, and other kinds of meeting skills. However, there are major gaps in the types of training available. These gaps include connecting SBDM to the ultimate goals of KERA, providing opportunities to learn group process skills, and expanding the audience beyond council members to include entire school faculties and central office staff.

As councils mature, their needs for training change, yet there are limited opportunities for training that go beyond introductory and technical workshops. Most councils can find workshops that describe the technical aspects of SBDM--what the law says, what areas they can set policy

in, and how to develop by-laws. This is important groundwork for establishing school councils, but it stops short of providing a deeper understanding of the larger picture--the purpose of SBDM and its role in achieving the ultimate goals of KERA for student learning. Regional service center staff express concern that the focus on the technical details detracts from the intent of the law and results in micro managing school operations rather than driving decisions by the quality of teaching and learning. Moreover, whereas technical training can be effective in a traditional workshop mode, learning opportunities for council members and school faculties that place SBDM in the context of a new vision of teaching and learning in each school require a more intensive, school-based set of learning opportunities.

As the first-year study reported, most councils consist of six people who have little experience working on a team and operating as a group responsible to a much larger constituency. For councils to operate effectively, members need skills in setting agendas, soliciting input from their larger constituencies, holding efficient meetings, delegating authority, and feeding back information to others.

> ***"We were spending a lot of time just arguing . . . and our meetings would go on for hours and we couldn't come to decisions. If we don't have the process down--if we don't have good group skills, it is impossible to be successful"*** Teacher council member.

These group process skills are essential not only to ensure that meetings are productive and not wearing on those involved, but also to ensure that decisions are based on adequate input and results communicated well to those concerned, including the whole faculty and the larger community of parents. If councils do not have the skills to operate on behalf of an entire school community, their decisions are likely to either go unheeded, raise tensions, or both. Several schools have benefited from training offered by the private sector--often through contacts of parent representatives on the council.

It is not only council members who need to understand the responsibilities of councils and what it takes to function effectively. All teachers, principals, central office staff, superintendents, and school board members--as well as parents--need to understand the purpose of councils and what it takes to support them. If there is not a shared understanding of the role of councils, they are unlikely to be a positive force in school transformation. But the need for training goes beyond understanding the intent. Principals and district staff are expected to play very different roles under SBDM than they have in the past. These roles demand a new kind of leadership--leadership that helps establish the conditions that enable others to reach their goals. Principals become enablers of councils and teachers to learn new ways of working together to strengthen curriculum and instruction. District staff and school boards in turn provide guidance, information, and assistance to enable schools to transform their organizations--a very different role than traditional rule setting and monitoring. Opportunities for learning these new roles--especially for school and district administrators--is almost nonexistent.

Council Decision Making. In spite of training limitations, councils are meeting and making important decisions. They are setting policies in different areas, making different choices about how much of the budget they initially want control over, and making major decisions about their schools. Hiring a new principal is still viewed as the single most important decision.

Site-based councils tend to operate with a set of committees and, as last year's study found, their style of operation is very much determined by the principal. Principals who are accustomed to sharing authority are more likely to have effective councils in which members feel they have a real voice. Principals who are traditionally more authoritarian are more likely to head councils in which teachers and parents alike feel powerless. The latter seems more prevalent in middle and high schools. Parents are particularly hesitant to speak up, feeling uninformed about many of the issues that arise. Where parents are active participants, the principal and teachers ensure that they have background information and take steps to make them feel that their contributions are valued. In some cases, it is parents on the council or on committees who are a valuable source of knowledge about group process skills and budgets. It is typically the principal who sets the tone, and either creates or inhibits honest input from teachers as well as from parents.

Effective decision making is also hindered by council members--and others--who bring personal agendas to the table. Councils cannot function as intended if they are the forum for dealing with the problems of individual students, teachers, or parents. Councils need mechanisms other than their monthly meetings to handle individual complaints and disputes. At the same time, councils cannot make sound decisions if they shy away from conflict. Issues need to be openly debated if they are to be resolved in effective ways. This is especially difficult when the cultural norm is to avoid disagreeing in public.

Of the eight areas in which school councils have the authority to set policies (curriculum, staff time, student assignment, schedule, school space, instructional issues, discipline, extracurricular activities), discipline and extracurricular activities still receive the most attention. Adopting policies about discipline, the use of corporal punishment, smoking, and availability of and eligibility for sports top the list. However, councils appear to be moving more into areas of staffing, curriculum, and instruction. For example, one council has set its own goals for increases in KIRIS scores; another has changed an administrative position into a teaching position (see below); and several have selected textbooks or other materials, added courses, or altered the daily schedule by adding or subtracting periods.

> Council members at a small rural school had the opportunity to hire a counselor or assistant principal. Instead, they decided to hire an extra primary teacher as a resource teacher to provide planning time, professional development, and information to the primary teachers. The resource teacher will:
>
> - teach every other day to free primary teachers to plan,
> - attend meetings and professional development workshops,
> - seek out resources and information, and
> - share the new knowledge with the other primary teachers.

The most difficult issues councils face concern personnel. Most of the questions, concerns, and conflicts arise around filling vacancies, staff transfer, supplemental salaries, creating new positions, itinerant staff, and related issues. These are very complicated issues, many of which cannot be anticipated and must be figured out as they arise. Personnel issues are even more complicated in districts that operate under collective bargaining agreements.

The release of the baseline test scores and associated thresholds--that is, expected improvement over the next two years--was expected to be a major motivation for councils to focus more on issues of curriculum and instruction. This has not yet proven to be the case. Some reasons may stem from teachers' reactions to the results, which range from fear and cynicism to "no problem." Some do not take the scores seriously in the belief that the consequences will never materialize--that the rewards will not exist and that the sanctions will not be legally supportable. High school teachers do not believe that seniors take the tests seriously.

Parents on councils have little to say about the thresholds--they tend to rely on what teachers say. In general, teachers say they have only minimal influence on the scores--that they can influence the scores by introducing new activities for the first time, but that only works once, and that they can "figure out" from the formula where they can have the most leverage. In small schools especially, teachers believe that the scores are very much a function of the make up of a particular cohort of students, which is beyond their control. Part of the emotion comes from uncertainty about what the tests really will be and how they will be scored. Most teachers responded, for example, that they will advise their students to skip the multiple choice questions because they heard they were not scored. Site administrators tended to be more negative than teachers.

Yet schools are making changes in curriculum and instruction in directions intended by KERA. So far however these changes seem to be the result of the primary program, outside consultants who work with individual schools, or other activities that teachers choose to participate in rather than the thresholds or school council decisions.

The Role of Budget Allocations. The deadline for the allocation formula was anticipated by some KERA observers to be a watershed event--resistant districts would not meet the deadline. Judging from interviews and newspaper coverage, this did not occur. Most districts made good faith efforts to meet the allocation deadline. A few were late, others perhaps incomplete, and certainly some with inaccuracies. But, by and large, districts sent budgets to schools and some made a considerable investment in helping councils understand the budgets.

That major controversies did not erupt around the budget allocations was due in part to the tendency of councils to take on responsibility for only small parts of the budget--often not the staffing portion--and to follow the budget prepared by the district. As councils become more familiar with the budgeting process, this will change. There are certainly areas of confusion and disagreement, especially around staffing issues; but most of these appear to be issues that result from the complex nature of school system budgeting and staffing, not from a refusal to allocate funds.

> ***"The district was sincere in making [the budget allocation process] work. It was a crawling success this year, walking next year, and maybe after that we will be able to run with it."*** Principal.

Reactions of school council members to receiving the budget allocations ranged considerably. The experience was described variously as a "feeding frenzy" to "we don't understand it yet." In another case, council members felt that it was much ado about nothing--that you cannot "do anything creative when you only have enough to fund your current employees." Others felt that simply the ability to carry over unspent funds to the next year was a tremendous benefit.

Perhaps the most significant effect of the allocation process so far is its educational value both for district administrators and school councils and faculties. Council members expressed surprise and amazement at the costs of some items. District staff acknowledged that they had never looked at the allocation of resources across schools.

> ***"Through the allocation process we have seen where everyone and everything is. It has forced us into reporting by school. . .we thought we were spending more in high schools and middle schools and it turned out we were wrong."*** District finance director.

The biggest problem with the allocation process seems to be the lack of accounting systems and technology support to provide immediate access to information and budgets and rapid answers to questions and requests for information. Moreover, in districts where there is not the local expertise or commitment to invest time in explaining budgets to councils, there are not many opportunities for understanding. The Kentucky Department of Education offers some training, as do others, but school councils find much of the training more relevant to district budgeting than to school-level budgeting. And, like the training described above, budget information is often communicated in isolation from issues of planning and decision making tied to student outcomes.

Implementing Council Decisions. A frequent complaint from council members is that decisions they make are not implemented by the principal or teachers. In some cases this reflects an unwillingness of the principal to take action. In other cases it results from councils not paying sufficient attention to gathering input, communicating their decisions and reasons clearly, and taking steps before, during, and after making important decisions to ensure ownership by those whose support is required in carrying them out.

> ***"We set up committees and the committees make plans and move to implementation and other teachers refuse--they want to do it their way."*** Teacher council member.

To the extent that councils simply replace district or state authority in mandating what teachers do, the intent of KERA and SBDM is lost. Moreover, councils find themselves unable to move forward.

> ***"We were doing a lot of backtracking. We would make a decision, then hear complaints, and then revisit the issue."*** Parent council member.

Implementation problems usually signal a problem in the way a council operates and views itself--and how it is perceived by the rest of the school faculty. Where there is not shared understanding of the role of the council, problems and conflicts are more likely to occur. Councils that see themselves operating on behalf of the whole school community conduct surveys, discuss issues and options with those involved, and create clear communication channels--between the council and its committees, among committees, and between council, committees, and the larger community of teachers, parents, other employees, and students. School faculties not involved in making decisions also bear responsibility for communicating to council and committee members and for implementing decisions.

> ***"We have empowered the council but we as faculty have not taken responsibility for giving input and reaction. Instead some get mad behind their back."*** Teacher.

Conclusions and Challenges Ahead

Given the magnitude of change envisioned by KERA, progress in implementing SBDM is considerable. More and more schools are opting to establish councils prior to the deadline. Councils that have been in operation for more than one year are taking on more responsibility. Across the state, there has been substantial press coverage of site councils which has been overwhelmingly positive. There are certainly exceptions, but the fact that negative stories tend to receive much more publicity than positive stories suggests that they are far fewer than expected.

The experience of the first few years of decentralizing authority to school councils underscores the complexity and magnitude of the task. Problems are unavoidable as new territory is charted each day. SBDM is not simply a matter of each school setting up a council--it is a matter of changing roles and responsibilities throughout the entire education system. As budgets are allocated to schools and as the next round of testing approaches, the depth and breadth of these changes becomes even more apparent.

The state and districts face the challenge of creating an infrastructure that can support a new, more decentralized system. Schools face the challenge of creating councils that serve to guide and support changes in teaching and learning. Everyone in the system from the school to the state faces the personal challenge of managing the stress that accompanies this kind of massive change. Districts must struggle with what these changes mean for their role as a new balance is forged between districts and schools.

Building the Infrastructure for Change. Decentralizing decision making to schools, and creating school and community-wide ownership for those decisions at each school, cannot occur without an efficient system for sharing information and communicating among all parties. As councils begin to take on budgets, they need access to information and quick answers to questions. In the absence of computer networks and electronic mail support, it is difficult to distribute information in a timely fashion and respond quickly to issues as they arise.

> ***"With decentralization you have to have effective communication. If you don't get feedback quickly from the schools you can't react quickly. We have no communication system now. We need e-mail. A lot of the problems will be alleviated when there is a statewide network and training program for support staff and the forms are computerized."***
> District finance director.

In the absence of an electronic infrastructures, schools and districts are creating other new forms of communication. In several districts, school councils have joined together across schools to form a district-wide council of councils to share information, to learn from each other, and to press their districts on issues of concern. New lines of communication are also appearing as some school boards see new faces for the first time in many years.

> ***"The board is discussing everything in public for the first time."***
> School board member.

Inside schools, councils are seeing the need to set up new communication mechanisms to ensure that the faculty and community have information and input. Councils are seeking new ways to communicate with the state as well. Several expressed the need for a way to register concerns and complaints and get quick responses that are not as serious as those that trigger the Office of Educational Accountability process which requires considerable documentation of evidence and time to resolve (and which, by its nature, tends to become adversarial).

These issues represent a microcosm of the large impact of the information age on our society. Access to information--for the latest research on teaching and learning, for examples of effective teaching strategies, for budget decisions, and for keeping track of plans and decisions--is the key to democratic participation.

Linking Decisions to Teaching and Learning. As councils move beyond the early stages of learning new roles and establishing operating procedures and policies, they are beginning to move into areas that directly affect the ultimate goals of KERA--student learning outcomes. However, this is proving to be a difficult transition for several reasons.

First, the transition is difficult because councils--and teachers--are overwhelmed with everything they need to learn from functioning effectively as a group, to establishing lines of communication, to understanding budgets and legal issues as well as creating policies and making decisions. The transition is also difficult because the directions for change are just beginning to be clear--from the new assessments and curriculum frameworks to the intent of the primary program and new high school reform plan. Yet inside schools, teachers and students (and their parents) do not yet grasp what these changes mean; and when they do, they are not likely to have the skills and knowledge to implement them. Finally the transition to the view of councils as operating on behalf of their school and, most of all, student learning has not had enough emphasis. The training, guidance, and support councils and faculties receive typically does not provide this vision of a council.

Establishing councils with certain legal authority is necessary for school transformation but not sufficient. Knowing about the technical and legal issues is important, and sets the

framework for council operations, but it is not the letter of the law that turns councils into leaders for school transformation. Similarly, the structure of a written plan can help guide the process but is not a replacement for experiences that create understanding of how teaching and learning should change. Where superintendents and principals supply that vision and create ongoing learning opportunities for faculty, major changes are underway--whether or not councils are in place. Where this leadership and vision does not come from administrators, school councils can provide it if they view themselves not simply as a more appropriate body for making decisions than the district but as a proactive force in creating exciting learning environments for students.

Where these kinds of changes are happening in schools, teachers, students, and parents are enthusiastic. For example, as one 27-year veteran teacher put it

> ***"[Students] are thinking for themselves. They are more confident. They are able to work together. They still need the skills but we used to spoon feed them and that doesn't work. They are reading things that interest them now. And, when we read from the basal, they can choose the story they want. The way I used to do it--everyone on the same story at the same time--was boring to them and to me. I used to practically fall asleep. Now they are excited and I am too."*** Elementary teacher.

Managing Stress. Change is stressful. The magnitude of the changes embodied in KERA puts everyone involved under pressure to change. The fact that people are frustrated and uncomfortable is a good sign--change does not happen without these feelings. But there is also a risk of burning out and giving up. And it is often those who are working the hardest to change who are most at risk.

Teachers and principals have exceptionally difficult challenges to meet, often with little guidance and support. To the extent that the workload on parents falls on the same few year after year, they too are at risk. From teachers' fears and frustrations to reductions in applications for principalships, signs of stress are evident.

The challenge for those inside and outside the education system is to appreciate the kind of pressure KERA places on everyone and to look for opportunities to relieve some of the pressure. The pressure is relieved by feelings of accomplishment, which come from having the time and opportunity to understand and learn what is expected. The pressure is also relieved by realistic expectations for how fast change can occur. And it is relieved by opportunities for people to talk, to share frustrations, and to help each other.

Finding the New Balance. KERA and SBDM dramatically change the roles and relationships of people throughout the education system, from teachers and parents to state administrators and policymakers. Inside schools, between schools and districts, and between districts and states, relationships are shifting from--each level telling the next what to do to setting goals and creating the conditions that enable the next level to reach the goals. This is a difficult transformation, especially given the lack of experience and skills in this new kind of enabling leadership and collaborative working relationships.

Considerable attention has been paid to school councils and their legal responsibilities. Much less attention has been paid to the equally profound changes in the roles of school board members, superintendents, and district staff. These roles, like those of managers in corporations that have decentralized, are not less powerful--they hold a different kind of power. Responsibilities shift from enacting decisions and overseeing their implementation to creating visions for their schools and the conditions that support schools to reach those visions.

The long-term ramifications for district leadership and policymaking are just beginning to be understood. What is the role of the district in ensuring equitable allocation of resources across schools that start at very different places? What does it mean to create the conditions that help schools transform their organizations? How do districts and schools create a balance between more autonomous schools and the need to maintain a broader sense of community? How similar should schools be? How does the district act as the "glue" that holds the schools together?

The vision for changes in classrooms are suggested by the curriculum frameworks, the new assessments, the primary program, and the high school reform plan. The vision for districts is less clear. Like teachers facing a class of very different students, like the federal government and the very different 50 states, the challenge is daunting how to balance the varied needs of each individual unit with the overarching needs of the whole? The fact that KERA raises these fundamental democratic issues underscores the profundity of the change that is underway.

ATTACHMENT A

KERA (KRS 160.345) states, in part, that the school council shall:

- have the responsibility to set school policy consistent with district board policy which shall provide an environment to enhance the students' achievement and help the school meet the goals established by [legislation]
- determine the frequency of and agenda for their meetings
- determine, within the parameters of the total available funds, the number of persons to be employed in each job classification at the school. The council may make personnel decisions on vacancies occurring after the school council is formed but shall not have the authority to recommend transfers or dismissals.
- which textbooks, instructional materials and student support services shall be provided in the school.
- From a list of applicants submitted by the local superintendent, the principal at the participating school shall select personnel to fill vacancies, after consultation with the school council. If the vacancy to be filled is the position of principal, the school council shall select the new principal from among those persons recommended by the local superintendent. [The council cannot transfer or dismiss personnel.]

In addition, the school council shall adopt a policy to be implemented by the principal in the following additional areas

- determination of curriculum, including needs assessment and curriculum development.
- assignment of all instructional and non-instructional staff time.
- assignment of students to classes and programs within the school.
- determination of the schedule of the school day and week, subject to the beginning and ending times of the school day and school calendar year as established by the local board.
- determination of use of school space during the school day.
- planning and resolution of issues regarding instructional practices.
- selection and implementation of discipline and classroom management techniques, including responsibilities of the student, parent, teacher, counselor, and principal.
- selection of extracurricular programs and determination of policies relating to student participation based on academic qualifications and attendance requirements, program evaluation and supervision.
- procedures, consistent with local school board policy, for determining alignment with state standards, technology utilization, and program appraisal.

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ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS

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August 1993

ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS

A Second Year Report to The Prichard Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report updates an ongoing assessment conducted under the auspices of the Prichard Committee of the Family Resource and Youth Services Centers Program, a component of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA).

The first year report, completed in 1992, provided a positive assessment of the implementation of this important component of KERA. The 1992 assessment found that the Family Resource Centers program within KERA was a well-designed component of the total education reform package and the policy was being implemented effectively.

Administration of the program by the Cabinet for Human Resources (CHR) was flexible and effective. Coordination between the CHR and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) was evolving and free of any major problems. The Interagency Task Force assigned responsibility by the KERA legislation for the Centers program was effective in setting policy and overseeing program implementation, and Center Advisory Councils were in place with varying degrees of local agency and parent participation and leadership. In the first year of operations, services were being coordinated and delivered either directly or indirectly through Advisory Council and Center efforts with many success stories of children and families being helped.

This second-year assessment does not revise or challenge any of the conclusions from the earlier study, but it does raise several issues in program implementation and evaluation. Although no problems or conflicts were identified, there is not yet a policy or plan devoted to how Advisory Councils and Centers will relate to the site-based decision-making component of KERA.

As the number of Centers grows, there is increased pressure on state staff for training, technical assistance, auditing, evaluation, and the like. Can CHR continue to provide these functions effectively without increased staff, and more importantly without the system becoming more bureaucratized, rule-driven, and centralized?

A potentially divisive issue is Coordinator's salaries. Although turnover of Coordinators is not yet an issue, disparities in Coordinator salaries is causing concern and frustration among some Center staff. Another potential problem is parent involvement.

Although varied by regions and districts, some Centers struggle to get continual and significant parent involvement.

The Interagency Task Force continues to deal effectively with most issues of cooperation and coordination, but the question of ``sunset" of the Task Force in 1995 and future of the Centers program has begun to surface. There is mixed evidence of the extent to which Centers have informed and involved local legislators and local public officials in Center activities. As suggested in the 1992 report, the future of the Centers program likely will depend on the extent to which a statewide advocacy coalition is developed.

ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS

Phillip W. Roeder

Introduction

This report updates an ongoing assessment of the Family Resource and Youth Services Centers Program, a component of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA). Under the auspices of the Prichard Committee, the author began assessing this component of KERA in January 1992 and wrote two reports issued by the Prichard Committee in July of that year.

Based on interviews with individuals involved in the adoption and implementation of KERA and the Centers, as well as analysis of program data collected by state and local agencies, the 1992 assessment found that the Family Resource Centers program within KERA was a well-designed component of the total education reform package and the policy was being implemented quickly but effectively. Administration of the program by the Cabinet for Human Resources (CHR) was flexible and effective. The program was not a rigid, top-down system, and local autonomy was substantial and meaningful. Coordination between the CHR and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) was evolving and free of any major problems.

The Interagency Task Force assigned responsibility by the KERA legislation for the Centers program was effective in setting policy and overseeing program implementation, and Center Advisory Councils were in place with varying degrees of local agency and parent participation and leadership. Local Centers and Advisory Councils were exercising judgment and making decisions within the policy framework and these actions were encouraged and respected by the state agency.

In the first year of operations, mandated services and optional services were being coordinated and delivered either directly or indirectly through Advisory Council and Center efforts. Within broad legislative mandates, Councils and Centers had developed priorities based on community needs assessments and were investing resources based on those priorities. Services were being provided through advocacy and coordination efforts of Centers with many success stories of children and families being helped.

Teachers, administrators, parents, and students familiar with or involved directly with Center activities tended to be supportive of the program and its early implementation. Councils and Centers were relatively successful in developing and extending cooperative relationships with service providers in their communities and in acquiring additional resources from the community. Also, school districts and local service agencies contributed additional resources to the operation of the Centers.

Overall, the first year report provided a positive assessment of the implementation of this important component of KERA. This second-year assessment does not revise or challenge any of the conclusions from the earlier study, but it does raise several issues in program implementation and evaluation.

Program Implementation Status

A summary of the budgetary and fiscal component of implementation provides initial evidence of implementation progress. In the first year of operation (FY92), Centers were appropriated $9.5 million. Governor Jones' Executive Budget requested $18.9 million for the second year as proposed originally in the KERA legislation, however the 1992 General Assembly cut the Governor's request to $15.9 million. In the first year of funding, 133 centers serving 232 schools were awarded grants and began operations. The awards in the first year of operation ranged from $10,800 to $90,000 and averaged $68,100. The amounts awarded are based on a formula allocation of $200/year per student eligible for the subsidized lunch program in the school up to a maximum of $90,000.

The second year of funding (FY93) totaled $15.5 million for 223 centers serving 414 schools in 103 of Kentucky's 176 school districts. The range of awards continued to be from $10,000 to $90,000 with almost half the centers (108) receiving awards of $80,000 to $90,000. Only twenty centers were awarded grants of less than $40,000 with the average yearly grant increasing slightly in the second year to $71,500. Of the total of 223 centers in FY93, 127 are Family Resource Centers, 55 are Youth Services Centers, and 40 are combined Centers.

The grant awards process completed in the spring of 1993 adds substantially to the statewide base beginning in FY94 (July 1993). One hundred fifty new centers were established to make a total of 373 centers serving 638 schools. The total state general fund appropriation for the expanded program is $26.4 million for FY94.

As the program completes the second year of operations, the two questions to be answered in this ongoing assessment of Centers continue to be:

(1) **Are the Interagency Task Force and local Centers and Advisory Councils carrying out the legislative mandate and spending public funds as intended by the designers of the policy?**

(2) **Are Centers having a positive impact on the well-being of families and children through increased access to needed health and social services provided either through improved system coordination or creation of new services?**

As in the first-year assessment, individuals interviewed in the spring of 1993 represented diverse organizations and interests in state government and in selected local communities and school districts. Six Centers across the Commonwealth which began operation in the first year of funding were site-visited by the author in the spring of 1992. Those same six Centers plus four additional ones which began operation in the second year of funding were site-visited by the author in the spring of 1993.

Centers were selected based on size, geography (regions of the state and urban/rural) and types of Centers (Family Resource, Youth Services, or combined Centers). Consultations with knowledgeable observers of KERA and the Centers in and out of state government led to selection of the Centers listed in Table 1. The Centers selected are not presented as a random or even representative sample of the FY93 population of 223 Centers, however they do meet the

above criteria and provide many examples of important implementation issues. The first six Centers listed in Table 1 were visited in both 1992 and 1993, while the last four listed were visited only in 1993.

TABLE 1
CENTERS SITE-VISITED[a]

Center	Type
Estes Elem - Owensboro (u)	FRC
Porter Elem - Johnson Cty (r)	FRC
Breckinridge Elem - Jefferson Cty (u)	FRC
Fulton County (r)	FRYSC
Caldwell County (r)	FRYSC
Fairdale H.S. - Jefferson Cty (s)	YSC
Clay County Middle (r)	YSC
Winburn Middle - Fayette Cty (u)	YSC
Allen Elem - Floyd Cty (r)	FRC
Adair County (r)	FRC

a. FRC (Family Resource Center), YSC (Youth Services Center), FRYSC (Combined Family Resource and Youth Services Center); u (urban), s (suburban), r (rural)

Local Centers

Revisiting the six Centers from the previous year found little change. They continue to operate effectively in carrying out the KERA mandate. Although adjustments in certain areas have been made, needs and priorities have changed very little, while programs and services have remained stable or have grown in size or scope. There was no turnover in Center Coordinators and little change in other staff. All six Centers report increased levels of awareness and communications with teachers and other school personnel. Some Coordinators report stronger relationships with local service providers, while others report little or no change from the previous year.

The four new Centers site-visited have come on-line with few problems. Coordinators and other staff were hired, office space and related facilities in or near the schools have been acquired and furnished, Advisory Councils have met regularly, and programs and services have been initiated. Assistance from CHR staff and the network of other Center Coordinators have been helpful in easing any early implementation or start-up difficulties. Although health care, counselling, and day care tend to be priorities in the new Centers as well the old, several Coordinators note that basic needs of children - clothing, nutrition, housing, and instances of possible neglect and abuse were more prevalent and time-consuming than they had anticipated. The four new Centers generally have made as much progress and have been as successful in their first year as the six Centers examined last year.

Advisory Councils

In the Centers visited, Advisory Councils meet regularly and have the required mix of individuals including parents and representatives of local service agencies. In most cases the Councils appear to be functioning as primarily as policy boards and are not much involved in day-to-day operations of the Centers, except that principals and some parents serving on the Councils are involved in day-to-day activities. As might be anticipated, some Centers have stronger, more effective parent involvement in Council and Center activities than others.

Although no problems or conflicts were identified, there is not yet a policy or plan devoted to how Advisory Councils and Centers will relate to the site-based decision-making component of KERA. In those Centers located in schools with active School Councils, few problems have been identified. This appears to be due to some overlap in membership on the two bodies.

State officials are aware of the potential problems in this relationship and have formed a committee of individuals from CHR and KDE along with Center Coordinators and Advisory Committee members to these issues and develop recommendations.

Service Coordination and Provision

What services are being coordinated and how are they delivered? Who is being served by Center programs? The brief answers to these questions are that Advisory Councils and Centers continue to ensure that mandated services and certain optional services are being provided and many children and families at-risk and needing help are being served.

Health care services not only are mandated by the legislation, but are identified through needs assessments as a priority by many Councils and Centers. Centers continue to approach this priority in a variety of ways ranging from having Health Department employees on-site to contractual arrangements with various providers in the communities. The CHR has an effort underway to strengthen coordination between Family Centers and local Health Departments.

Another example of variation in providing mandated services is child care. Family Resource Centers are mandated to assist with full-time child care for two and three-year-olds and after-school care for four to twelve-year-olds, and Centers appear to be doing this as needed in their community. Some have day care on site, while other Centers work to obtain more slots for child-care in the existing network of providers in their community. Some Centers report no problems or issues in this area, while others face periodic problems with availability of this service.

Needs assessments performed by the various Councils and Centers vary in methods and findings. The first year Centers are using informal methods to update their initial assessments, while the new Centers have used a variety of methods to assess needs. The Interagency Task Force and state staff continue to discuss the extent to which more direction and assistance in needs assessment should be provided to existing and forthcoming Centers. Discussion is also occurring over the degree to which needs assessment should be included in the formal evaluation or monitoring efforts.

Cooperation and Collaboration

How are Councils and Centers working with the state staff in CHR, with the local school system, and with local service providers? As found in the first-year assessment, collaboration with service agencies has not always been easy to accomplish. Centers sometimes have had to struggle to establish cooperative relationships with certain service providers and agencies in their community, but none of the ten Centers report any major or continuing problems. Several Centers have established relationships and receive some assistance from the local business community, but other Centers have not made much progress in this area.

Although not uniformly positive or problem-free, all ten Centers report good to excellent relations with school personnel including principals, teachers, and counselors. As Center Coordinators and school personnel gain experience and learn, relationships continue to become stronger and more effective. Any initial wariness or skepticism about this new program appears to have been overcome in these ten Centers.

Staff of KDE and CHR agree that relationships remain relatively positive and cooperative between the two agencies as well as the various units within these and other state Cabinets, but there still is potential for "turf battles." Also, over the past year the Workforce Cabinet has become more involved in the Centers program. The primary means of coordination among the various agencies is the Interagency Task Force which continues to function well as a mechanism to help resolve issues that affect more than one agency of state government. Since 1990, the Task Force and Committees have met regularly and established patterns of communication. The Task Force continues to deal effectively with most issues of cooperation and coordination, but the question of "sunset" of the Task Force in 1995 and future of the Centers program has begun to surface. In terms of program governance and organizational location at the state level, should the Centers program stay in CHR (with or without the Task Force), go to KDE and become part of the SEEK formula, or should the Interagency Task Force continue?

Regardless of the resolution of the governance issue, it is clear that a strength of the program is the network of Coordinators that has developed. Much consultation and assistance, especially during the start-up periods occurs through the informal network of Center Coordinators. These strong relationships, most developed with the encouragement of the state staff and training and orientation activities are important in implementation and administration of the program.

Monitoring and Reporting

Progress has been made in program monitoring and reporting with the introduction of an automated information system. Although not without "bugs" and some complaints among Coordinators, most agree that the state officials and others responsible for the system have listened and made changes in response to feedback. The vast majority of the 223 Centers were able to acquire the necessary hardware and software, access the system and provide data in the format required. Other continue to acquire that capability. The initial report using data collected electronically is expected in September. In addition to a narrative assessment, this report should provide "hard" data on services, participants, and other indicators of Center performance.

The reporting forms being used generate mixed reactions with several Coordinators suggesting some overlap and confusion among the many forms. Most Coordinators see the reporting as necessary and important, but they continue to see room for some improvements and believe that state officials are aware of and are responding to their concerns. A workgroup of twenty Center Coordinators is working with state officials on the information system. The new automated system appears to have been implemented relatively successfully.

In addition to the automated reporting system, as in the previous year approximately thirty Centers were assessed through "in-depth monitoring" including site visits by a team of state officials. Those Centers that were evaluated in this process report that the monitoring visits were thorough, professional, and helpful. Problems or deficiencies were identified and corrected in this process.

Another indicator of the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the program is that some reapplications for continuation grants apparently were "held back" in order to examine and correct some possible deficiencies. Monitoring and evaluation appear to be effective components of the Centers program.

An informal or soft indicator of the overall success of the Centers program as well as the evaluation component is the increased pressure on the grant process. State staff suggest that "losers" in this year's competition were much more concerned and upset than in the first two years of awards. This suggests that the program is viewed positively and schools and districts increasingly recognize value in having Centers.

The information system and issues of monitoring and evaluation relate to a broader issue of management and control. The desire for decentralization and local autonomy derived from a basic principle of education reform as expressed in KERA has to be balanced by accountability for mandated programs and state funds. The growth in number of Centers from 223 to 373 beginning in FY94 has several implications. Although the computerized system helps manage and control a growing, complex system, there is increased pressure on state staff for training, technical assistance, auditing, evaluation, and the like. Can CHR continue to provide these functions effectively without increased staff, and more importantly without the system becoming more bureaucratized, rule-driven, and centralized?

Conclusions

Implementation of the Centers program continues to be relatively effective and free of major problems. Although this assessment is based on limited case-studies and lacks much quantitative data collected under controlled conditions, the answers to the two assessment questions remain positive. Acknowledging these limitations, this study finds that the Interagency Task Force and the Centers and Advisory Councils are carrying out the legislative mandate as intended, and Center programs appear to be having a positive impact on children and families. But what about the future? What are some issues that might affect continued success of the program?

One program that appears likely to have a positive impact is the possible award to Kentucky of a multi-year, multi-million dollar grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. The focus of the Pew Initiative is to develop integrated services for young children and families with an emphasis on a preventive approach. Since this approach is similar to the Centers program, it is likely that if awarded the Pew Initiative would add considerable resources and recognition to Kentucky's existing efforts to support children and families as an integral component of education reform. The laboratory sites for the Pew Initiative are the Gateway ADD and west Louisville.

A potentially negative or divisive issue is Coordinators salaries. Although turnover of Coordinators is not yet an issue, disparities in Coordinator salaries is causing concern and frustration among some Center staff. Data from a 1992 survey of coordinators showed salaries ranging from less than $15,000 to $50,000 with coordinators having a variety of educational and work experience backgrounds. Although most recognize that the scope of responsibilities and intensity of work of coordinators may vary across and within districts, some question the fairness of the disparities in salary.

The broad issue relates to "professionalism" and qualifications; the more practical issue apparently is whether coordinators are certified or classified employees in the district and work year-round rather than nine or ten months. Some districts apparently view classified employees as less professional than certified employees (teachers and administrators), consequently salaries are usually much lower. If coordinators perceive they are doing the same job with comparable experience, but one individual is certified and making twice as much as another who is classified, problems are likely to occur, especially if both are in the same school district. A work group was formed to study the issue and in late 1992 advised that in keeping with a core value of education reform, the Interagency Task Force not set a statewide policy on coordinator salaries, but that further study might be needed to address the problem.

Another potential problem is parent involvement. Although varied by regions and districts, some Centers struggle to get continual and significant parent involvement. This is a problem for public programs in general as well as for the schools, and is not unique to Family Centers, but Centers seem ultimately to be very dependent on parent support for success. Most coordinators recognize the importance of parent involvement and use a variety of strategies to strengthen this area. Successful parent involvement appears to relate closely to encouragement and action by the school principal and existence of a strong, active site-based decision-making council.

There is mixed evidence of the extent to which Centers have informed and involved local legislators in Center activities. There also is mixed evidence of the extent to which local power structures beyond the school system have become aware of or involved in the Centers network. As suggested in the 1992 report, the future of the Centers program likely will depend on the extent to which a statewide advocacy coalition is developed. One step in the formation of such a coalition has been the establishment in 1992 of the Family Resource and Youth Services Coalition, a professional organization made-up primarily of Center Coordinators.

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